CLAIM SET AS AMENDED

1. (Currently Amended) A speech communication apparatus including a speech communication microphone, a speaker and a communication unit for amplifying an output signal from said speech communication microphone, said speech communication microphone and said speaker being fixedly disposed in the vicinity of a mouth and an ear of an individual, respectively, said communication unit comprising:

amplifying means for amplifying an input signal and outputting said input signal so amplified; and

control means for controlling the gain of said amplifying means in response to an excessive input signal, said control means including:

a VOX detection circuit, a sneezing detection circuit, and an OR circuit, the OR circuit for outputting a theoretical sum of an output signal from the VOX detection circuit and an output signal from the sneezing detection circuit ~~wherein said control means controls~~ for controlling the gain of said amplifying means such that a reproduced sound of ~~an~~ said excessive input signal is reduced to a predetermined level only for a predetermined period of time when said excessive input signal is detected.

2. (Original) The speech communication apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said control means controls the gain of said amplifying means by detecting an input signal corresponding to sneeze or cough.

3. (Original) The speech communication apparatus according to claim 1, and further including operation means for varying said predetermined period of time.

4. (Original) The speech communication apparatus according to claim 2, and further including operation means for varying said predetermined period of time.

5. (Original) The speech communication apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said predetermined period of time is set at a range from 0.7 to 5 seconds both inclusive.

6. (Original) The speech communication apparatus according to claim 2, wherein said predetermined period of time is set at a range from 0.7 to 5 seconds both inclusive.

7. (Original) The speech communication apparatus according to claim 3, wherein said predetermined period of time is set at a range from 0.7 to 5 seconds both inclusive.

8. (Original) The speech communication apparatus according to claim 4, wherein said predetermined period of time is set at a range from 0.7 to 5 seconds both inclusive.

9. (Currently Amended) A speech communication apparatus including a speech communication microphone, a speaker and a communication unit for amplifying an output signal from said speech communication microphone, said speech communication microphone and said speaker are fixedly disposed in the vicinity of a mouth and an ear of an individual, respectively, communication unit comprising:

amplifying means for amplifying an input signal and outputting said input signal so amplified; and

control means for controlling the gain of said amplifying means in response to an input signal which ~~rises sharply~~ exceeds a first predetermined level, said control means including:

a VOX detection circuit, a sneezing detection circuit, and an OR circuit, the OR circuit for outputting a theoretical sum of an output signal from the VOX detection circuit and an output signal from the sneezing detection circuit ~~wherein said control means controls~~ for controlling the gain of said amplifying means such that a reproduced sound of ~~an~~ said input signal which ~~rises sharply~~ exceeds the first predetermined level is reduced to a second predetermined level for a predetermined period of time when said ~~excessive~~ input signal exceeding a first predetermined level is detected.

10. (Original) The speech communication apparatus according to claim 9, wherein said control means controls the gain of said amplifying means by detecting an input signal corresponding to sneeze or cough.

11. (Original) The speech communication apparatus according to claim 9, and further including operation means for varying said predetermined period of time.

12. (Original) The speech communication apparatus according to claim 10, and further including operation means for varying said predetermined period of time.

13. (Original) The speech communication apparatus according to claim 9, wherein said predetermined period of time is set at a range from 0.7 to 5 seconds both inclusive.

14. (Original) The speech communication apparatus according to claim 10, wherein said predetermined period of time is set at a range from 0.7 to 5 seconds both inclusive.

15. (Original) The speech communication apparatus according to claim 11, wherein said predetermined period of time is set at a range from 0.7 to 5 seconds both inclusive.

16. (Original) The speech communication apparatus according to claim 12, wherein said predetermined period of time is set at a range from 0.7 to 5 seconds both inclusive.

17. (Currently Amended) A speech communication apparatus including a speech communication microphone, a speaker and a communication unit for amplifying an output signal from said speech communication microphone, said speech communication microphone and said speaker are fixedly disposed in the vicinity of a mouth and an ear of an individual, respectively, said communication unit comprising:

an amplifier to amplifying an input signal and outputting said input signal so amplified; and

a controller to control the gain of said amplifier in response to ~~at least one of an input signal which rises sharply and~~ an excessive input signal, wherein said controller controls the gain of said amplifier such that ~~at least one of a reproduced sound of an~~ a reproduced sound of said excessive input signal ~~which rises sharply~~ is reduced to a predetermined level only for a predetermined period of time when said excessive input signal is detected ~~and a reproduced sound of an excessive input signal is reduced to a predetermined level only for a predetermined period of time when said excessive input signal is detected~~,

wherein said predetermined period of time is set at a range from 0.7 to 5 seconds both inclusive.

18. (Original) The speech communication apparatus according to claim 17, wherein said control means controls the gain of said amplifying means by detecting an input signal corresponding to sneeze or cough.

19. (Original) The speech communication apparatus according to claim 17, and further including operation means for varying said predetermined period of time.

20. (Original) The speech communication apparatus according to claim 18, and further including operation means for varying said predetermined period of time.

21-24. (Canceled)

25. (New) The speech communication apparatus according to claim 1, and further including operation means for varying said predetermined level of said excessive input signal.

26. (New) The speech communication apparatus according to claim 9, and further including operation means for varying said first predetermined level of said excessive input signal.

27. (New) The speech communication apparatus according to claim 17, and further including operation means for varying said predetermined level of said excessive input signal.

28. (New) A speech communication apparatus including a speech communication microphone, a speaker and a communication unit for amplifying an output signal from said

speech communication microphone, said speech communication microphone and said speaker being fixedly disposed in the vicinity of a mouth and an ear of an individual, respectively, said communication unit comprising:

amplifying means for amplifying an input signal and outputting said input signal so amplified; and

control means for controlling the gain of said amplifying means in response to an input signal,

wherein said control means controls said amplifying means such that said amplifying means becomes mute for a predetermined time when said input signal exceeds a predetermined level.

29. (New) The speech communications apparatus according to claims 28, wherein said speech communication microphone and said speaker are fitted in a helmet.

30. (New) A speech communication apparatus including a speech communication microphone, a speaker and a communication unit for amplifying an output signal from said speech communication microphone, said speech communication microphone and said speaker being fixedly disposed in the vicinity of a mouth and an ear of an individual, respectively, said communication unit comprising:

amplifying means for amplifying an input signal and outputting said input signal so amplified; and

control means for controlling the gain of said amplifying means in response to an input signal,

wherein said control means controls said amplifying means such that said amplifying means becomes mute for a predetermined time when said input signal stays below a predetermined level.

31. (New) The speech communications apparatus according to claims 30, wherein said speech communication microphone and said speaker are fitted in a helmet.